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DESCRIPTION OF FLOW JULY SEVEN YEARS AGO

(By Joseph G. Pratt, in the Hawaii
Herald, July 29, 1899.)

We left Volcano House, Kilauea, 7 o'clock on Monday morning, July 10, on horseback, some fourteen strong, together with a number of others traveling in smaller companies and some in pairs so that when at 8 o'clock we arrived at Ollie Shipman's ranch, a count of noses would have revealed upwards of thirty, all argonauts seeking the same destination. Under the guidance of Mr. E. D. Baldwin we traveled west by north several hours, arriving at the water tanks and cow pens belonging to W. H. Shipman, eight miles from Volcano House, where we filled our canteens, had a bite of luncheon, gave our horses water, and after a half hour's rest continued our journey, arriving at the "Bark" House cattle pens at 3 o'clock p. m., seventeen miles from Volcano House, where we remained for the night.

At this place we were joined by Mr. Shipman whose men were then engaged in rounding up cattle preparatory to getting them out of the country. We had hoped to have gotten from the Hawaiian cowboys some definite information as to the location of the outbreak as well as the best route to take to reach it, but in this we were disappointed as none had preceded us or knew any more than we. After holding a powwow it was determined that rather than attempt to go directly to the top from this place by following the kipuka (land oases in sea of lava) in which we were then camped, as it had been represented we could do, we would wait until morning and then, crossing the a-a and pahoe flows of 1855, go to the edge of the 1881 flow at a point where water could be had as well as grass for horses. Early in the morning it was discovered that our cook had deserted us, and Captain Jack Wilson immediately deputized Colonel J. U. Smith as such and he in turn found subordinates in sufficient number to produce a fair spread of bouf and gravy and bread and coffee. After breakfast, when Professor McClusky had washed the dishes and Joe Flores, our to be guide from this on, had gotten our pack horse packed, we struck up through the grove of koa timber skirting the 1881 flow, our objective point being a small kipuka some three or four miles distant, to reach which obliged us to travel through a very rough country and out upon the '81 flow. At 12 o'clock noon of Tuesday we had reached the upper limit of travel by horses and hurriedly divesting ourselves of all unnecessary accoutrements and investing ourselves with full canteens of water and plenty of provisions, each man taking his own allowance of canned corn beef, hard tack and baked beans, we struck out on foot toward the summit of Mauna Loa, where now for the first time we could get an uninterrupted view, as for forests, of the burning mountain peak. The sight as well as the supposed nearness of this fascinating thing stimulated most of the party to a degree that caused them to expend in the early hours of our tramp the energy as well as the water and shoe leather so absolutely necessary to enable them to receive the good madame's benediction at the summit.

Permit me to digress sufficiently to say that if those seeking to gain the summit in future expeditions would profit by the experience of others they will go well shod, as for shoes, as well as provided with at least two gallons of water to the individual. As for food, it seems strange to relate but fact is not one of all those who traveled even as far as the first general stopping place on the 1881 flow, after we left our horse, had even a normal appetite, many ate little or nothing and I question whether any of the party was at any time hungry. This is quite the contrary to all our former mountain climbing experiences. However, it demonstrates that volcano hunters on Mauna Loa can dispense with canned pork sausages, boned turkey, chicken and corned beef; plenty of water, hard biscuits, sweet crackers, raisins and tablets of meat extract, which can be readily prepared into a tea drink, is all that is required in shape of food supply.

The party, upward of thirty strong, were in fine fettle as we launched ourselves on the sea of undulating lava, pahoe, of the 1881 flow, and with our eye fixed upon the cloud of smoke by day and the pillar of fire later on pressed on up the slope, each bearing his burden graciously, hopefully, on his back. It was now past 3 o'clock p. m., Tuesday, July 11, when Mr. H. S. Pratt, accompanied by his wife, Messrs. Henry Easton, Moragny, Janeway, J. G. Pratt, Morgan-Hatton Grace, W. H. Shipman, E. D. Baldwin, L. Turner, et al., arrived at what may be said to be the first prominent mound or hill between this point and our starting place of foot travel. Then it was discovered that the fire mountain's position was a bit illusive, and instead of being able to see the demons skating on the surface of the lava pool of the crater, we were seemingly quite as far away as at the beginning of our tramp, and this fact coupled with foot and leg weariness as well as lack of sufficient water and to several an attack of mountain sickness, the elevation at this point being approximately 7500 feet, caused quite a number to hesitate and then, turning back retraced their steps to the kipuka where our horses were supposedly tied up safely until our return. Two of the more hardy of the party had stopped but for a moment at Point Retreat; these were Messrs. Moragny and Janeway, surveyors, who traveling by themselves and in company with each other were not hampered in their actions by the contrary opinions and emotions which prevailed among the larger party as to the wisdom of going ahead or turning back. I should state that Camp Retreat is distant some five or six miles up the mountain and on the 1881 flow through an exceedingly rough tract of a-a, from the kipuka where we started to walk.

It was somewhat tantalizing to observe with what comparative degree of confidence as well as ease and rapidly these gentlemen passed on, seemingly unmindful of any thought other than of reaching the fire, that induced

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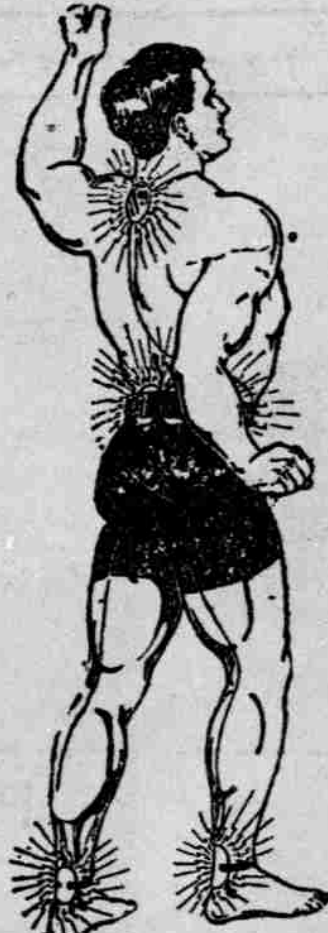
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a couple of the more venturesome members of the Wilson party, the writer being one of these, to go on also, and with full canteen, two and a half gallons of water weighing about twenty pounds (yet giving, as it subsequently developed, a ton of confidence and assurance), and a rain coat and food supply strapped on the shoulders, the balance of the party were soon lost sight of in the rear. Our experiences in getting up to the higher ground on which a fair view of the volcano was to be had were a trifle exasperating as, night coming on, and having but a fitful, uncertain light, that of the moon and the splashing of white or red heated lava over the sides of the cone of the crater, it became necessary to follow a course beset by uncertain pitfalls which had been avoided, day being then on, by those in advance, who having gained a prominent point could be seen between us and the red glare of the volcano's light on an artificial horizon.

In our ambitious, possibly foolhardy, desire to secure equally advantageous ground as they, we followed in a straight line, or nearly so, onward and upward, through and over an area of newly formed lava beds, even then hot under the feet and stifling with sulphurous gases to the senses—here, there and everywhere all around and about us this lake of lava seamed with cracks and crevices, the red, lurid lava was plainly visible and painfully in evidence, when finding it impossible to advance further a retreat was to all appearances our only salvation. In our desire to reach the position occupied by Moragny and Janeway, whom we could see distinctly, yet in ignorance of the character of the intervening country, we had gotten our barque well out of sight of water and into the midst of a lake of lava of recent deposit. We had suffered and endured so much in getting this far that like the drummer boy when asked to beat a retreat replied "he did not know how," so with us, we did not know how, it was so uncertain and quite impossible to tell when we were retreating or going ahead. And here arises a condition of singular phenomena, especially obtaining to lava flows of very recent origin. It is this. When we first got on to the new flow the daylight was on and though we realized it was warm, even hot, under foot, yet to appearances the lava seemed and looked black, much as the top of a newly polished cook stove in daytime. Then, too, as we went on, the light of the volcano being in front helped to mislead us as to the true condition of the ground under foot. True it was that almost in every crack and crevice red hot lava was clearly to be seen, but our friends, as we supposed, had traversed this same ground. They, being in front of us, it was afterwards discovered, had gone around the flow. It

was when we found the heat too great and the gases too oppressing and we turned about to go back that we discovered, looking to the east and toward the darkness, the intensity of the heat as well as the stretch of lava we had crossed, then it was that the peculiar condition of which I spoke developed. Darkness of night had cast her mantle over the newly formed lava beds and its whole surface was enlivened and kindled in such a way as to make it appear ten fold more livid than when we had passed over it, the cracks over which we had but recently passed and which then seemed warm with a trace of red deep down now as we looked upon them seemed to come up to the very surface with but a coating of blackened crust, and even that looked angry. There was no retreat. We could not stand still to exceed one-half minute and fortunately so, for in moving about we came to a mound of the pahoe flow of 1881 about the size of a dining table and about three feet above the level of the new flow. Its presence was felt rather than seen, a fall with scratched hands and arms discovered to the writer its character. Yet it was with a sense of gratitude as well as relief that we established ourselves on this bit of hospitable lava—the balance of a long though not wearisome night of Tuesday, July 11, a shipwrecked mariner in a sea of lava.

All night long the fitful splashing and roaring going on in the volcano was plainly to be seen and heard and its beauty and awfulness was more oppressive by reason of the hot blasts of air carried by unfriendly breezes from it and the intervening lava across our place of refuge. A kind wind sprung up after midnight and blowing from across old lava relieved us from the oppressing heat. At no time during that night, as I now recall my sensations, was I half so frightened or apprehensive even of the possible outcome as since then when told that had a smart rain fallen during the night the chances were we would have been suffocated by the steam arising from hot lava—with no one to tell the tale, for "we" are singular.

Night gave way to the early rays of the morning sun and with its first light we broke camp making for the mound occupied by Moragny and Janeway, to find their things, canteens, oil coats, etc., only. Casting our eyes towards the volcano we discovered them well on a half mile over this same hot lava bed.

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